

# THE USUAL LEAD SEAL

NICOLAS OIKONOMIDES

**B**yzantine state officials often added a *corroboratio* at the end of the documents issued by them; that is, a statement about the sign(s) of validation which conveyed legal power to their act.<sup>1</sup> These *corroborationes* usually consist of set phrases, more or less elaborate, which may be divided into two main categories:

a. Those containing mention of only the seal which was appended at the bottom of the act. This type of document, without signature, prevails in the ninth and the first half of the tenth century; it is less frequent in the second half of the tenth and the first half of the eleventh, and simply disappears after that.<sup>2</sup>

b. Those containing mention of the subscription as well as of the seal, both of which appear at the end of the document. Documents with this formula appear toward the middle of the tenth century, come to predominate very soon thereafter,<sup>3</sup> and remain in use from the eleventh to the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

These introductory remarks may have some importance for Byzantine diplomatics, especially for

<sup>1</sup> It may be useful to point out here that a formal *corroboratio* appears very seldom on Byzantine imperial documents: F. Dölger and J. Karayannopoulos, *Byzantinische Urkundenlehre*, I: *Die Kaiserurkunden* (Munich, 1968), 49, 102, 104, 106, 115, 126–27.

<sup>2</sup> Examples: F. Trinchera, *Syllabus membranarum graecarum* (Naples, 1865), nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 23, 28 (of the years 885, 892, 911, 956, 975, 1032, 1034, respectively); *Actes du Prôtaton*, ed. Denise Papachryssanthou (Paris, 1975), no. 6 (of 943); *Actes de Lavra*, ed. P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, Denise Papachryssanthou, I (Paris, 1972), no. 6 (of 974?); *Codice Diplomatico Barese*, IV: *Le pergamene di S. Nicola di Bari, periodo greco (939–1071)*, ed. Fr. Nitti di Vito (Bari, 1900), no. 21 (of 103?).

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that eight of the ten documents mentioned in the previous footnote come from southern Italy. — An interesting “transitional” case is to be found in a document issued in Thessalonica by the doux Joannes Chaldos in 995: the scribe, obviously using an “antiquated” formula, announces in the *corroboratio* that only a seal is to be expected as a validation sign; nevertheless, the doux, more up to date, added his autograph signature at the end of the document: F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (Munich, 1948), no. 56.

<sup>4</sup> *Actes de Lavra*, nos. 2, 3, 4, 11 (of 941, 952, 994); *Actes de Xéropotamou*, ed. J. Bompaire (Paris, 1964), no. 1 (of 956); Trinchera, *Syllabus*, nos. 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 21, 42 (of 999, 1000, 1011, 1016, 1026, 1054); etc. This is the meaning of the expression συνήθως πιστωθέν, common in the eleventh century: “seal and signature.”

the study of public servants’ documents.<sup>5</sup> They also show that the lead seal was considered an important element of an act because it guaranteed its validity, even if it was not accompanied by the subscription of the author. If we add the well-known fact that lead seals served, too, to close letters in order to protect their confidentiality, we come readily to the conclusion that public servants—and, for that matter, all Byzantines—would have chosen seals which were easy to recognize and difficult to counterfeit. These conditions could best have been met if the seals of an individual were always the same—or, at least, always the same when used for documents addressed to the same people.<sup>6</sup>

In order to produce lead seals, Byzantines used *boulloteria*, that is, special iron pincers, the working ends of which had inner faces inscribed like dies; by hammering a blank lead plate (such as those illustrated in figs. I-II r, s, t) between these two dies, one obtained the imprint of the *boulloterion*, i.e.,

<sup>5</sup> The documents of public servants have not yet been the object of a comprehensive study. Their characteristics have been outlined by Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern*, 150–53, 184–93; useful remarks on their classification have been added by N. Svoronos, “Remarques sur les actes des fonctionnaires,” *La paléographie grecque et byzantine* (Paris, 1977), 423–27, and by J. Lefort, “Observations diplomatiques et paléographiques sur les praktika du XIV<sup>e</sup>s.,” *ibid.*, 461–72, as well as in various publications of Byzantine documents, the most recent of which is consecrated to acts of public servants in Patmos: Maria Nystazopoulou-Pelekides, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, II: Δημοσίων Λειτουργῶν (Athens, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Although the Byzantines probably made use of seals more than any other medieval people, they seem not to have been particularly bothered by the idea that one might counterfeit another person’s seal. At least, I do not know of any clause in the legislation providing for punishment of such an act. Of course, one may suppose that counterfeiting a seal was not a crime *per se*; the crime would have been the using of such a seal to fabricate a forged document: F. Dölger, “Urkundenfälscher in Byzanz,” *Byzantinische Diplomatik* (Ettal, 1956), 384–402; cf., more recently, I. P. Medvedev, “O poddelke vizantijskih dokumentov v XVI v.,” *Vspomogatel’nye Istoricheskie Discipliny*, 1 (1969), 277–86.

— On the other hand, several Byzantine authors insist on the importance of the seal for validating and “protecting” a document: See, e.g., G. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θελών καὶ τεγών καπόνων* (hereafter, Rhalles-Potles), II, 694; V, 62; *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage*, ed. P. Noailles and A. Dain (Paris, 1944), 171; *Michaelis Pselli scripta minora*, ed. G. Kurtz and F. Drexel, I (Milan, 1936), 256; etc.

a seal.<sup>7</sup> The use of boulloterion is mentioned in the *corroboratio* of some tenth- and eleventh-century documents, mainly those coming from Southern Italy, in phrases that lead us to assume that each public servant had only one such pincers: *bullitirio suo*, *bulloterio nostro*, *proprio nostro bulloterio*, τῷ ἰδιῷ βουλλωτηρίῳ.<sup>8</sup> In others the way the seal is mentioned leads again to the assumption that it was unique: *bulla nostra*, σφραγὶς ἡμῶν, βούλλα ἡμῶν.<sup>9</sup> But even more frequently one finds the expression “the usual (lead) seal” (συνήθης)<sup>10</sup> or, in short, “sealed” (σφραγισθέν), or “confirmed” (πιστωθέν), “as usual” (συνήθως).<sup>11</sup>

If a seal was “usual,” it was because it had been used many times and, consequently, the addressee of the document had seen it repeatedly, was able to recognize it, and thus was disposed to believe in its authenticity.<sup>12</sup> It is conceivable, therefore, that

<sup>7</sup>There are several publications on boulloteria and their functioning, the more recent of which are: Ph. Grierson, “Byzantine Gold Bullae with a Catalogue of those at Dumbarton Oaks,” *DOP*, 20 (1966), 246–48; G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, I/1 (Basel, 1972) (hereafter, Zacos-Veglery), IX–XII.

<sup>8</sup>For example: Trinchera, *Syllabus*, nos. 1, 5, 10, 11, 42 (885–1054); *Codice Diplomatico Barese*, I: *Le pergamene del duomo di Bari*, ed. G. B. Nitto Rossi and Fr. Nitti di Vito (Bari, 1897), 32; cf. *Actes de Lavra*, no. 8, ll. 40–41 (989); G. Ficker, *Erlasse des Patriarchen von Konstantinopel Alexios Studites* (Kiel, 1911), 21; Rhalles-Potles, IV, 49. In these last documents the patriarch refers to his own boulloterion, which must have been unique, since the chartophylax of the patriarchate carried it hanging in front of his breast: Rhalles-Potles, IV, 534–35. This question is less clear in documents concerning the imperial boulloterion; see *BZ*, 2 (1894), 44, 46; 28 (1928), 42; Zepos, *Jus*, I, 297–98.

<sup>9</sup>For example: Trinchera, *Syllabus*, nos. 3, 6, 14, 21, 23, 28 (892–1032); *Codice Diplomatico Barese*, IV, no. 21 (1032); F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca*, VI (Vienna, 1890) (hereafter, Miklosich-Müller), 17 (1079).

<sup>10</sup>For example: *Actes du Prōtaton*, no. 6; *Actes de Xéropotamou*, no. 1; *Actes de Lavra*, no. 6; Trinchera, *Syllabus*, nos. 7, 16, 42, 44; Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern*, nos. 56, 58; *Codice Diplomatico Barese*, IV, no. 32; Miklosich-Müller, 41 = Nystazopoulou, “Ἔγγραφα Πάτρων”, II, no. 52; Ficker, *Erlasse des Patriarchen*, 21; Rhalles-Potles, V, 32; BNJbb, 3 (1922), 93; A. Guillou and W. Holtzmann, “Zwei Katepansurkunden aus Tricarico,” *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 41 (1961), 19, 28 (943–1087).

<sup>11</sup>For example: Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern*, no. 57 (1062); Miklosich-Müller, 15 = Nystazopoulou, “Ἔγγραφα Πάτρων”, II, no. 50 (1073).

<sup>12</sup>The same expression ἡ συνήθης σφραγὶς is also currently used by state officials who recognized the imperial seal on orders that were addressed to them: cf. for example, Miklosich-Müller, 35, 37 = Nystazopoulou, “Ἔγγραφα Πάτρων”, II, 40, 53 (1088, 1087); Zepos, *Jus*, I, 364, 396, 408 (1124–1166); *IRAIK*, 6 (1900), 31, 32, 33, 37 (1152–1160); *Actes de Lavra*, no. 65, lines 37, 49; no. 67, line 30 (1181, 1196); etc. These examples can easily be multiplied: see, e.g., A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Ανέκδοτα Ἑλληνικά, Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη, in Ἑλλ. Φιλολ. Συλλ., 17, Παράστημα (1886), 45.

certain officials may regularly have used one of these anonymous seals, which are preserved in considerable quantity, and that the boulloteria which produced them were probably on sale ready-made, since they were completely impersonal:<sup>13</sup> after all, what was important was the consistent use of the same boulloterion. Apparently, one such impersonal seal still exists at the bottom of an original tenth-century document of the *ek prosopou* of Thessalonica, Symeon, in the corroboratio of which it is precisely stated that it was confirmed by the “usual seal.”<sup>14</sup> But it must be remarked immediately that, fortunately for us, such modesty was not widespread among Byzantine officials, who not only engraved their name and all (or the more important of) their titles on their seals, but also felt obliged to change their boulloterion as soon as they got a promotion. Moreover, we may assume that each boulloterion had a limited lifespan, especially in cases of officials who, because of their position, were obliged to use it often; we may assume also that if their boulloterion no longer worked satisfactorily, the officials had to repair it, if possible, or replace it. In such cases, did their “usual seal” also change?

Obviously, there are many possible answers to this question, especially since change depended mainly on the personal whims of the owner of the seal. Yet, I think it useful to raise the question, considering the vast amount of relevant material—17,000

<sup>13</sup>By “impersonal” I mean mainly those metrical seals that referred their reader to the document if he wanted to know who the owner of the boulloterion was. Another type of anonymous seals, those bearing the effigies of two saints without any inscription, is less “impersonal” since the selection of saints was probably a matter of individual preference. One may imagine that impersonal boulloteria could also be used by hired scribes in order to close letters of people who did not have their own boulloterion. Many anonymous seals have already been published: see, for example, G. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l’empire byzantin* (Paris, 1884), 56–64; K. Konstantopoulos, Βυζαντινὰ μολυβδόβουλλα τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου (Athens, 1917), 185–200, 367–70; V. Laurent, *La Collection Orghidan* (Paris, 1952), nos. 547–565 and 649–680; *idem*, *Les sceaux byzantins du Médailleur Vatican* (Vatican City, 1962), nos. 236–245; etc.

<sup>14</sup>*Actes de Lavra*, no. 6 (of 974?). The seal (15 mm.) bears the metrical inscription: + | + Γοα|φη παρι|στά – καὶ | γένος | μοι καὶ | τύχην. It must be said, though, that there is something disturbing in the way this seal is attached to the Lavra document; a final answer cannot be given on this point until the document is reexamined. The same inscription, divided in lines in the same way, reappears on an Athens seal: Konstantopoulos, Βυζαντινὰ μολυβδόβουλλα, no. 1040 (18 mm.); cf. V. Laurent, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine* (Athens, 1932), nos. 85 and 85a. Moreover, three unpublished specimens, practically identical to the Lavra one, are preserved in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (accession nos. 58.106.937; 58.106.938; 58.106.1349).

lead seals—in the Harvard University Collections (Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art)<sup>15</sup> which represents more than one fourth of the estimated 60,000 lead seals preserved worldwide.<sup>16</sup> In these collections one can easily find several seals that obviously belonged to the same person and

use them as a basis to try to deduce what changes, if any, happened to this person's boulloterion. What follows will be based on four examples. In order to facilitate comparisons, all the seals to be used and compared have been photographed on a scale of approximately 1 : 1.

### I. Theodore Beriboes, *protospatharios* and *strategos* (eleventh cent.)

Eighteen specimens of this seal will be taken into consideration here. Seventeen of them are reproduced in figures 1 *a-q* (obverses) and 2 *a-q* (reverses).

Figs. 1–2 *a*: DO 58.106.2539 – Diam. 27 mm. Chipped

- b*: DO 58.106.2540 – Diam. 23 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- c*: Shaw 75 – Diam. 25 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- d*: Fogg 84 – Diam. 22 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- e*: Fogg 85 – Diam. 22 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- f*: Fogg 137 – Diam. 23 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- g*: Fogg 138 – Diam. 26 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- h*: Fogg 219 – Diam. 22 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- i*: Fogg 331 – Diam. 27 mm. *Obv.* badly erased by corrosion
- j*: Fogg 332 – Diam. 24 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- k*: Fogg 333 – Diam. 24 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- (not reproduced): Fogg 392 – Diam. 22 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- l*: Fogg 434 – Diam. 25 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- m*: Fogg 886 – Diam. 23 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- n*: Fogg 1374 – Diam. 23 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- o*: Fogg 1447 – Diam. 24 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- p*: Fogg 1448 – Diam. 22 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center
- q*: Fogg 1476 – Diam. 24 mm. Lead too small. Struck off center

It is rather unusual to find eighteen specimens of the same seal preserved in one collection. As all of them come from Constantinople, one may venture a hypothesis as to why they ended up together. As is known, seals were usually found in the shallow waters of the Sea of Marmara where soil, dug out in the city for building new houses, was dumped and gradually washed away by the waves, leaving any lead seals dumped with it near the shore.<sup>17</sup> One may imagine that this random digging struck a place where, in the eleventh century, stood a building to which the strategos Theodore Beriboes addressed many letters while he was serving in the province: it was perhaps the central administration, perhaps his own house. The lead seals became buried in the ground, then were dug out and dumped into the sea, and thus began their journey to collectors such as Thomas Whittemore (1871–1950), whose seals are now at the Fogg and who lived in Istanbul in the twenties and the thirties, more or less at the same time as G. Howland Shaw (1893–1965).

At first glance these specimens seem to be different from one another, in spite of the fact that they all came from the same boulloterion (see *infra*). As the above descriptions make clear most of them were struck on blanks much smaller than that required to encompass the whole engraved surface of the dies. Only three were struck on blanks 26–27 mm. in diameter (specimens *a*, *g*, *i*), while all the others have a maximum diameter ranging between 22 and 25 mm. In fact, a blank larger than 27 mm. would have been required to cover the whole surface of the dies. In order to visualize this statement, one might look

<sup>15</sup> N. Oikonomidès, "Les sceaux de plomb byzantins conservés dans les collections de l'Université de Harvard (Dumbarton Oaks-Fogg Museum of Art)," XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Athen, I, Suppl. (Vienna, 1981), section 3/1.

<sup>16</sup> W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich*, I (Vienna, 1978), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Zacos-Veglery, VII.

at the three lead blanks from the Dumbarton Oaks Seal Collection reproduced at the bottom of figs. 1 and 2: specimen *r* (DO 55.1.5109: diam. 31 mm.) would have been ideal for the boulloterion; specimen *s* (DO 55.1.5110: diam. 26,5 mm.) is more or less similar to the blanks used for specimens *a*, *g*, *i*, which reproduce most, but not all—since no specimen is perfectly centered—of the inscribed surface of the boulloterion; specimen *t* (DO 55.1.5115: diam. 24 mm.) is more or less similar to the blanks used for the production of the majority of our seals.

Only hypotheses can be formulated as to why Beriboes insisted on using blanks smaller than those required by his boulloterion. Of course, smaller blanks must have been cheaper: the 23 mm. specimen *b* weighs approximately 14 gm. while the 27 mm. specimen *a* weighs approximately 17 gm. (and, for the sake of comparison, the 31 mm. blank *r* weighs 21 gm.). But lead has always been a cheap metal, and for a strategos, even an eleventh-century, down-graded strategos,<sup>18</sup> the explanation of mere personal thriftness is not convincing. What seems to me more likely is that in the provincial town where Beriboes held his office no blanks of the proper dimensions were available, and therefore the strategos had to settle for what he could find.<sup>19</sup>

A direct result of the relative smallness of these blanks is that all of them have been struck considerably off center. Thus, these preserved seals differ from one another as each preserves only a random part of the dies. Yet, a very detailed comparison of our specimens (of individual letters, signs, and lines as well as of the relative positioning of groups of letters) shows clearly that all eighteen were struck from the same boulloterion. Only one slight change must be mentioned, a change that was probably due to the fact that, over a period of time, Beriboes' boulloterion began to wear out: the dots of the borders, as well as those of St. Theodore's halo, which are so clear in specimens *b* and *f*, gradually lost much of their crispness and ended up becoming very much like a continuous line (specimens *g*, *o*, *p*, *q*). This was undoubtedly because the thin iron protrusions of the die that separated the dots became less pronounced with time and repeated usage.

In spite of these small changes and in spite of the fact that each seal's imprint represents only part (and not always the same part) of the boulloterion, it seems obvious that the addressees of Beriboes' letters would be able to recognize his seal by comparing it to one previously received. Thus, this "usual seal" properly fulfilled its purpose.

Now we may propose an edition of the Beriboes' seal. It must be stressed that the inscriptions that follow do not appear complete on any of our specimens, but all their elements appear on one or another of them. In other words, the edition that I am proposing is in fact the reconstitution of the two dies of the Beriboes' boulloterion.

*Obv.* Bust of St. Theodore, wearing chlamys and holding the spear (right hand) and the shield (left hand). Vertical inscription: Θ|ΘΕ|Ο-Δ|Ω|Πι : 'Ο (ἄγιος) Θεόδωρ(ος). Along the upper half of the circumference, inscription : + ΚΕΡΟΗΘΙΤΩCΩΔΔ , : + K(ύρι)ε βοήθι τῷ σῷ δού(λῳ). Border of dots.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines preceded by an ornament. Border of dots.

—·—+ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ|ΑCΠΑΘ|SCTPATI|TΩΡΕΡΗ|—ROH—

+ Θεοδώρ(ω) (πρωτο)σπαθ(αριώ) (και) στρατ(γῷ) τῷ Βερηβόῃ.

A certain Beriboes was strategos of Chios and defeated a party of Arab pirates in 1028; but as his first name is not attested, we cannot say whether he is identical with the owner of our seal.<sup>20</sup> Another Beriboes, a seditious Vlach (no first name mentioned), lived in Larissa under the reign of Constantine X Doukas (1057–1067),<sup>21</sup> but he was certainly not a strategos. Two other members of the same family, Manuel and Nicephorus, are attested in the letters of Michael Choniates: they belonged to the aristocracy of southern Greece at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

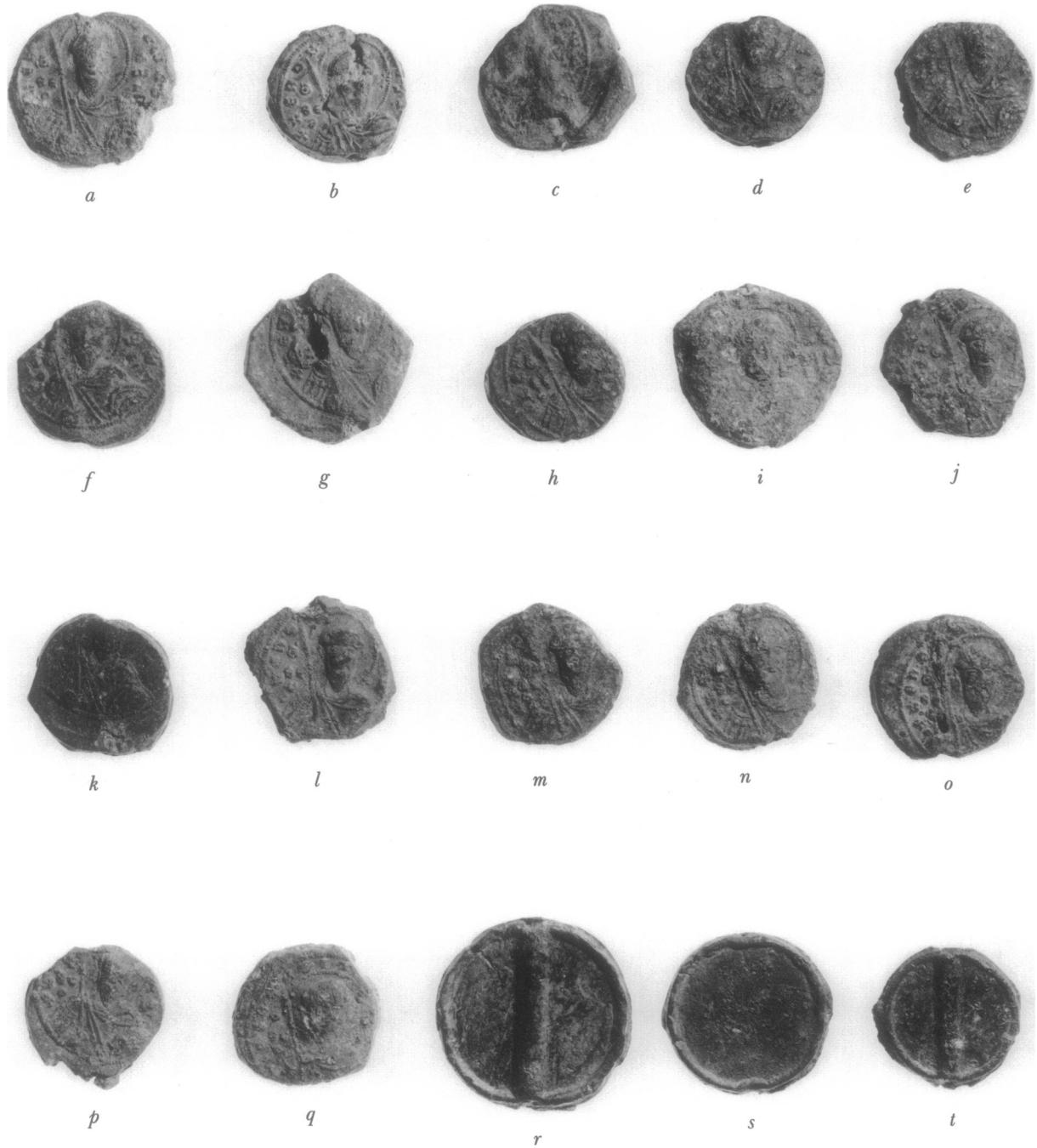
<sup>18</sup>Cf. N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1972), 345–46.

<sup>19</sup>Molds for making lead blanks were found at Corinth: see Gladys R. Davidson, *The Minor Objects [Corinth, XII]* (Princeton, 1952), nos. 2828–31.

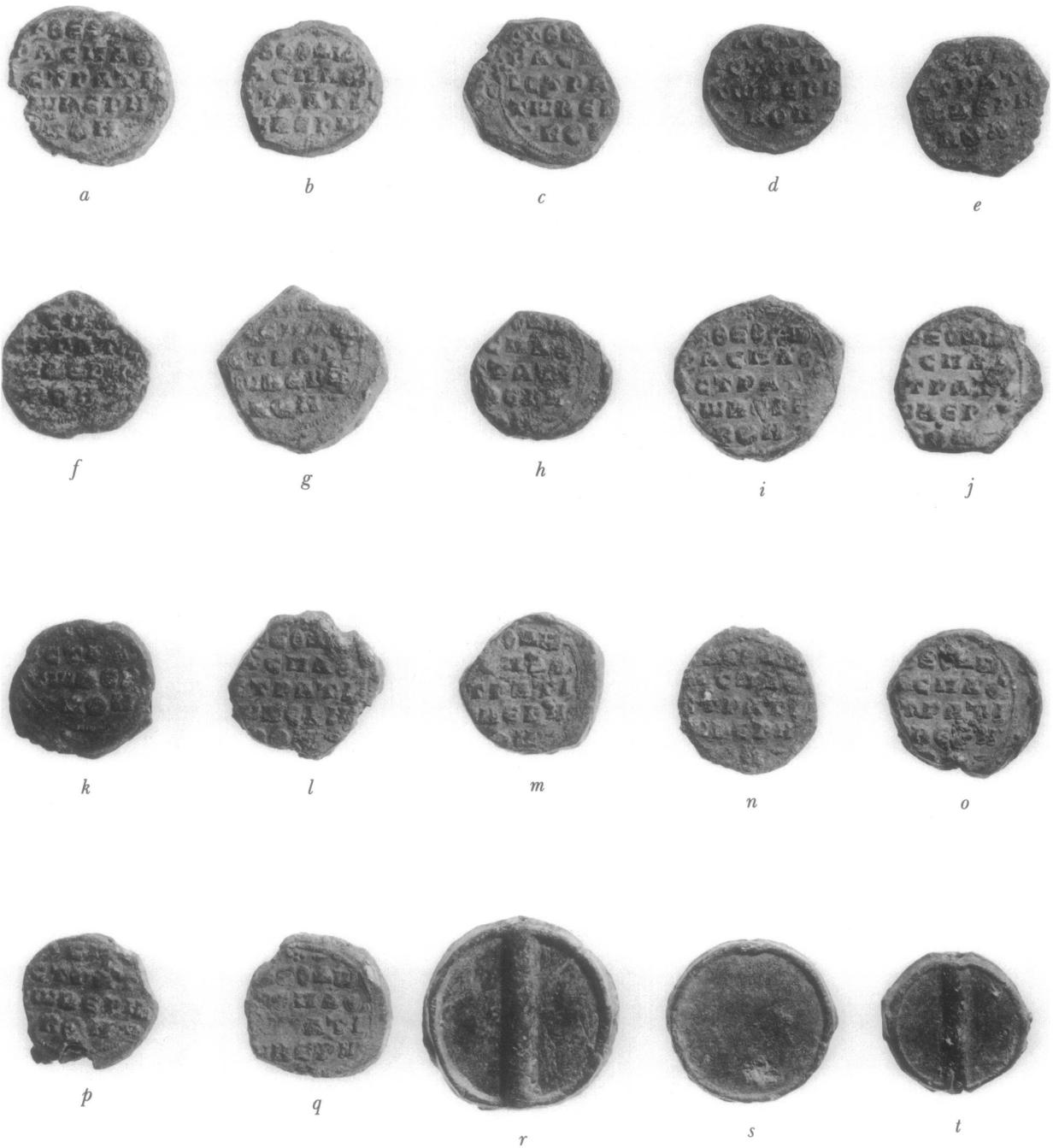
<sup>20</sup>Ioannis Scylitzae, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn, CFHB (Berlin-New York, 1973), 373.

<sup>21</sup>Sovety i rasskazy Kekavmena, ed. G. Litavrin (Moscow, 1972), 256 and 527, note 937 (Slavic etymology of the name).

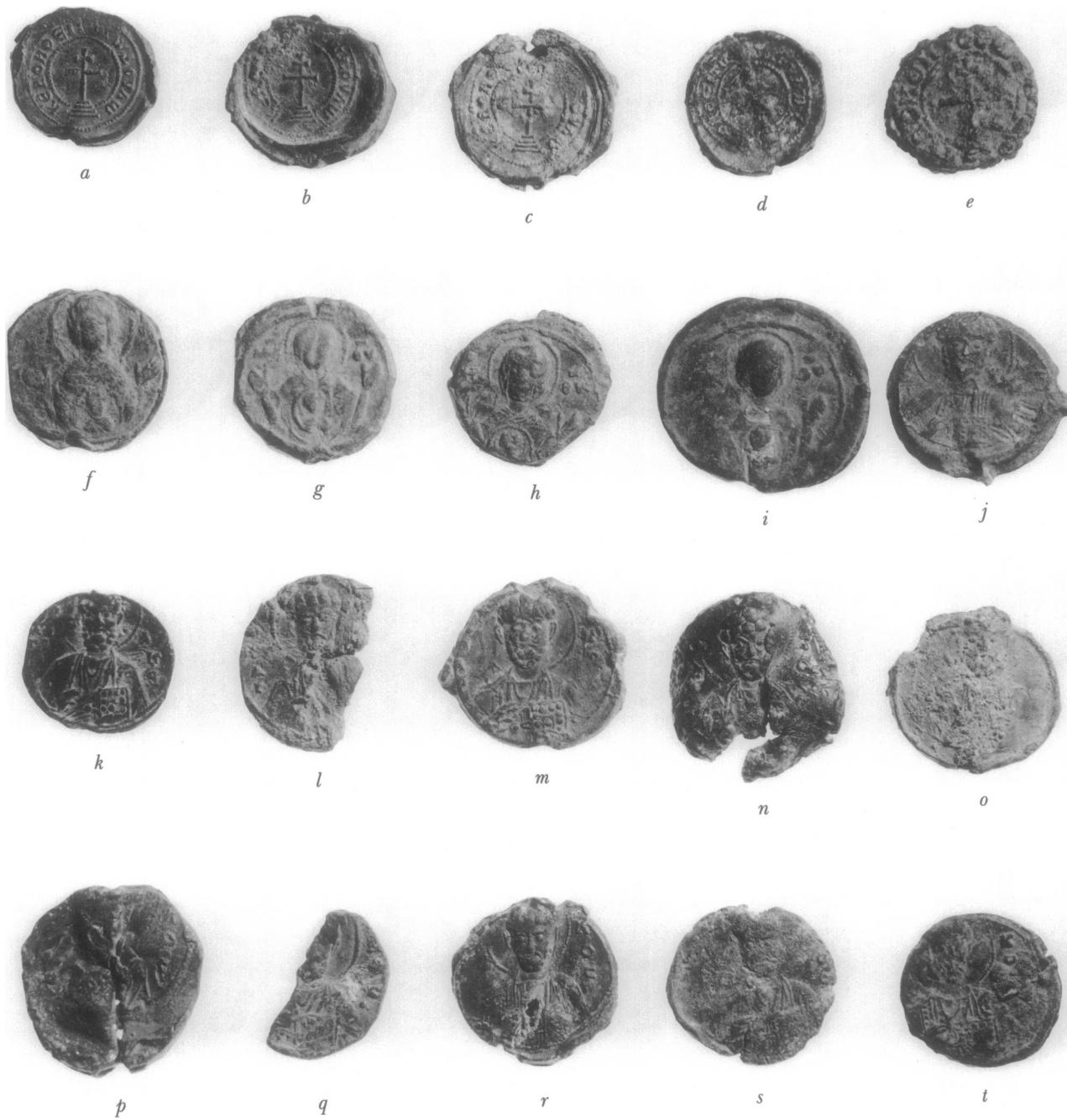
<sup>22</sup>G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates, Metropolit von Athen* (Rome, 1932), 193, 258, 262, 263, 266, 273.



1, *a-q.* Seals of Theodore Beriboe (XI cent.), obverses; *r-t.* Blanks, obverses



2, a-q. Seals of Theodore Beriboes (XI cent.), reverses; r-t. Blanks, reverses



3, *a-e.* Seals of Demetrios (X cent.), obverses; *f-i.* Seals of Constantine Kamytzes (XII cent.), obverses; *j-t.* Seals of Basil (XI cent.), obverses



4. *a-e.* Seals of Demetrios (X cent.), reverses; *f-i.* Seals of Constantine Kamytzes (XII cent.), reverses; *j-t.* Seals of Basil (XI cent.) reverses

II. Demetrios, imperial *spatharokandidatos* (later, *protospatharios*) and *strategos* of Aigaion Pelagos (tenth cent.)

Five seals in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection will be taken into consideration here. They are reproduced on figures 3 *a-e* (obverses) and 4 *a-e* (reverses).

Figs. 3–4 *a*: DO 55.1.1424 – Diam. 24 mm.; field 18 mm.

*b*: DO 55.1.1425 – Diam. 27 mm.; field 18 mm. Partly flattened

*c*: DO 55.1.1426 – Diam. 27 mm.; field 18 mm. Partly flattened; oxydated

*d*: DO 55.1.1427 – Diam. 23 mm.; field 18 mm. Weak imprint; channel broken on the reverse

*e*: DO 55.1.1431 – Diam. 25 mm. Chipped

Specimens *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d* all come from the same boulloterion. Since the blanks used were all of the proper size, all seals have been adequately centered and printed, although some of them are now poorly preserved. Specimen *a* is in excellent condition and will serve as a basis for the edition that follows. The readings of specimens *b*, *c*, and *d* simply confirm partly what is read on *a*.

*Obv.* Cross with two transverse arms, standing on four steps. Along the circumference, between two concentric borders of dots, inscription: ΚΕΡΟΗΘΕΙΤΩCΩΔΟVΛΩ : K(ύρ)ιε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines. Border of dots.

ΔΙΜΗΤΡΙΩΡ' CΠΑΘ' | ΚΑΝΔΙΔ' SC | TΡΑΤ, TΣΕΓ, | ΠΕΛΑΓ,

Διμητρίω β(ασιλικῷ) σπαθ(αρο)κανδιδ(άτω) (καὶ) στρατ(ηγῷ) τοῦ Ἐγ(αῖον) Πελάγ(ους).

Specimen *e* comes from a different, larger boulloterion; thus the blank used was not large enough to contain the imprint of the dies.

*Obv.* Cross with two transverse arms standing on four steps. Along the circumference, between two concentric borders of thick dots (the outer one is hardly visible), inscription: ΚΕΡΟΗΘΟHTOCΩ ΔΟVΛΩ : K(ύρ)ιε βοήθη τῷ σῷ δούλῳ.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines preceded by a row of pellets. Border of thick dots.

° ° ° . HMHTPI . R'A'CΠΑΘΑ| . . WSCTPATI| . . TOVΕΓΠ| . ΛΑΓΟV

[Δ]ημητρίῳ[ῳ] β(ασιλικῷ) πρωτο)σπαθα[ρο]κανδιδ(άτω) (καὶ) στρατ[ηγῷ] τοῦ Ἐγ(αῖον) Π[ε]λάγου.

As there is no abbreviation sign at the end of the last line, I maintain the genitive Πελάγου because this is a demotic form attested on other lead seals<sup>23</sup> and surviving today. The owner of the above seals is not known from any other source.

My basic assumption is that all five bullae belong to the same person. Demetrios was imperial spatharokandidatos when he was appointed strategos of Aigaion Pelagos. His boulloterion bearing those titles (specimens *a-d*) was engraved with remarkable elegance, to the point that one is tempted to say that Demetrios had it made in Constantinople, when he was preparing to join his province. While on service there, however, Demetrios was promoted to the higher rank of imperial protospatharios, and had to change his seal in order to reflect his new title. His new boulloterion must have been made in the province, if one may judge from the lower quality of the craftsmanship. But, although the new boulloterion had a large engraved field (approx. 23–24 mm.) it was essentially a copy of the old one; with the same borders, cross, steps, circular inscription, and the same inscription of five lines on the reverse. It is this similarity, beyond the identity of name and title, that makes me think that our fifth seal (specimen *e*) belongs to the same person as the four others. Furthermore, the blank used for the fabrication of this fifth seal weighs 12,880 gr., very like specimen *b* (12,750 gr.) and *c* (12,850 gr.)—the maximum diameter of specimen *e* is slightly smaller than those of *b* and *c*, which seem to have been warmed before being struck and, for that reason, to have been deformed. Thus, one is left with the impression that Demetrios, after having changed his boulloterion, continued to use the same old stock of blanks.<sup>23a</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For example: Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, 194, no. 6; 195–96; Konstantopoulos, Βυζαντιακὰ μολυβδόβουλλα, no. 96 = Zacos-Veglery, no. 249. See also Zacos-Veglery, nos. 213, 2649.

<sup>23a</sup> Let it be added that specimens *a* and *d* have also very similar diameters (24 and 23 mm.) and weights (9,50 and 9,04 gm.); thus, they would represent another type of blank that Demetrios has used.

### III. Constantine Kamytzes, *sebastos* (twelfth cent.)

Four seals will be taken into consideration here. They are reproduced on figures 3 *f-i* (obverses) and 4 *f-i* (reverses).

Figs. 3–4 *f*: DO 58.106.3610 – Diam. 27 mm.; field 24 mm. (*rev.*). One side faintly printed; *obv.* torn open by the thread

*g*: Fogg 500 – Diam. 27 mm.; field 24 mm. (*rev.*). Erased in center

*h*: Fogg 507 – Diam. 25 mm. Chipped

*i*: DO 58.106.1263 – Diam. 34 mm.; field 25 mm. Weak imprint; flattened

These four specimens look very similar but they also have substantial (though fundamentally unimportant) differences. Here are some elements worth noting (measurements in mm.):

	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>i</i>
Diameter of the Virgin's halo	14	10	11,5	11
Height of the Virgin's head	9	7	9	9
Distance covered by the letters ΚΩΝΤΑΝΤ (line 2)	19	20	21	24
Distance from top of line 1 to bottom of line 4	13	14	14	15

These differences in measurements show beyond any doubt that our four seals were struck from four different boulloteria. Minor differences in epigraphy point in the same direction; specimens *f* and *g* have a cross on top of the reverse, but no cross at the beginning of line 1; specimen *h* has a cross at the beginning of line 1 and no cross on top; specimen *i* has two crosses, one on top and one at the beginning of line 1. One should also note that there are substantial epigraphical differences between specimens *f* and *g* (cf., e.g., the horizontal bar above ΘΚΕ in line 1; the spacing of the letters TZH in line 5; the alignment of the two Ω in lines 2 and 3; etc.)

Here follows a detailed description of our four specimens:

*Obv.* All four have a bust of the Virgin orans, with the oval medallion of Christ in front of her. On either side, inscr.: ΜΡ – Θ . (in *f*), ΜΡ – ΘV (in *g*), ΜΡ – ΘV (in *h*), ΜΡ – ΘV (in *i*): Μή(τη)ρ Θ(εο)ῦ. Borders of dots of varying clarity, sometimes so thick and continuous that they look like linear borders.

*Rev.* Inscription of five lines; borders of dots, similar to the ones of the obverses:

*f*: + |ΘΚΕ\_Θ|ΚΩΝΤΑΝΤΙ|ΝΩCΕΡΑΤΩ|ΤΩKAMV|TZH

*g*: + |ΘΚΕ\_Θ|ΚΩΝ . ANTI|ΝΩCΕΡΑΤΩ|ΤΩKAMV|TZH

*h*: + ΘΚΕ\_Θ|ΚΩΝΤΑΝΤΙ|ΝΩCΕΡΑΤΩ| . ΩKAM . | . .

*i*: + | + ΘΚΕ\_Θ|ΚΩΝΤΑΝΤΙ|ΝΩCΕΡΑΤΩ|ΤΩKAMV|TZH

All four reverses contain the same inscription, which reads as follows: + Θ(εοτό)κε β(οή)θ(ει) Κωνσταντίνῳ σεβαστῷ τῷ Καμύτζῃ.

Two more specimens of this seal are known; the first has been found and published in Bulgaria<sup>24</sup> and the second, kept in Vienna, seems to have originated from the same boulloterion as our specimen *h*.<sup>25</sup> The owner of the seal, the sebastos Constantine Kamytzes, is a known person who lived in the first half of the twelfth century, was married to a relative of Emperor John II Komnenos, was entrusted with several military commands, and died before Theodore Prodromos (i.e., probably before 1156–1158).<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Constantine Kamytzes, during the period of his life when he bore the title of sebastos (which could well have been over twenty years), had at least four boulloteria. As he chose not to mention on his seal the various functions he occupied for limited periods of time, all four boulloteria seem to have been faithful copies of each other; it is certain, however, that they were not molded from one another.

It seems to me obvious that this systematic effort toward uniformity has only one explanation: Kamytzes was trying to maintain unchanged his “usual lead seal.” All four specimens that we have published here would be easily recognized as coming from the same person.

<sup>24</sup> K. Kemalov and D. Nikolov, “Vizantijski molivdovul ot s. Vulkosel, Blagoevgradsko,” *Muzei i pametnici na kulturata* 6/4 (1966), 14–15 (cf. *BZ*, 60 [1967], 478). Unfortunately, this publication was not accessible to me.

<sup>25</sup> Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel*, no. 171.

<sup>26</sup> Career outlined by Seibt, *loc. cit.*

Now, if this is so, one may wonder if that same man would also have had a second lead seal, quite different from the one discussed above. Of course nothing excludes the possibility that he might have another boulloterion for, say, his personal correspondence. But in the light of the above remarks, I tend to consider this as rather improbable. Consequently, I would oppose attributing to our Constantine the metrical seal of a sebastos Constantine Kamytzes preserved in the Athens Numismatic Museum.<sup>27</sup>

IV. Basil, *protospatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou*, great *chartularios* of the *genikon* and *proto-notarios* (later, he will abandon this last office and replace it by that of "judge of the Hippodrome of Peloponnes and Hellas") (eleventh cent.)

Eleven seals in the Dumbarton Oaks Collections will be taken into consideration here, plus some from other collections, already published. The Dumbarton Oaks seals are all reproduced in figures 3 (obverses) and 4 (reverses).

Figs. 3–4 *j*: Shaw 135 – Diam. 29 mm. Struck off center

*k*: DO 55.1.2249 – Diam. 24 mm. Lead relatively smaller than required

*l*: DO 58.106.3370 – Diam. 28 mm. Half is preserved; broken along the badly-centered channel; has suffered from heat

*m*: Shaw 714 – Diam. 30 mm. Struck off center

*n*: DO 55.1.2246 – Diam. 30 mm. Crack along the channel; the seal has been twisted and deformed, obviously by excessive heat

*o*: DO 58.106.3432 – Diam. 27 mm. Poorly printed on both sides

*p*: DO 55.1.2244 – Diam. 31 mm. Struck off center; deformed by excessive heat

*q*: DO 55.1.2870 – Diam. 25 mm. Half is preserved; broken along the channel

*r*: DO 55.1.2245 – Diam. 27 mm. Crack along the channel; deformed by excessive heat

*s*: DO 55.1.2247 – Diam. 27 mm. Crack along the channel; deformed by excessive heat

*t*: DO 55.1.2248 – Diam. 26 mm. Lead too small; reverse partly erased along the circumference by excessive heat

Six of the above specimens (*l*, *n*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *t*) have obviously suffered from heat after having been struck: this would indicate that they must have come from one spot in Constantinople where the earth that covered them had been heated, probably by a fire, to a point that the lead had softened and twisted, but not melted.

Specimen *j* is quite different from the others. But the ten remaining ones are very similar: same image on the obverse, same inscription on the reverse. Yet they come from several boulloteria, which can be distinguished.

*Obverses*. They all bear a bust of St. Mark blessing with his right hand and holding a richly bound book, his gospel, with the left hand. They all seem to have borders of dots. Yet there are substantial differences in the vertical inscriptions accompanying the Saint's effigy as well as in details of his face (diameter of halo; distance from the lower edge of his curly hair to the end of his beard; overall dimensions of the head). These elements appear in Table below.

TABLE

Specimen	Epigraphy	Diam. of halo	Hair-beard	Head
<i>k</i>	.  A ΓΙ  . -Μ ΑΡ Κ Ο	14 mm.	8 mm.	small
<i>l</i>	Ο M Α P-	15 mm.	8 mm.	big
<i>m</i>	.  Μ Α P-K Ο  .	15 mm.	9 mm.	big
<i>n</i>	.   .   .  P-K Ο C	15 mm.	7 mm.	medium
<i>o</i>				medium
<i>p</i>	O C			medium
<i>q</i>	K Ο C		8 mm.	medium
<i>r</i>	K Ο C	13 mm.	7 mm.	medium
<i>s</i>	O C			medium
<i>t</i>	K Ο  .		7 mm.	medium

<sup>27</sup> Konstantopoulos, Βυζαντιακὰ μολυβδόβουλλα, no. 636; cf. Seibt, *loc. cit.*

To judge from the above elements, we have at least three (possibly more) dies of the obverse: one represented by specimen *k*, another (specimens *l* and *m*) and at least a third, represented by the remaining specimens.

*Reverses.* They all have an inscription of seven lines surrounded by a border of dots.

- k:* . . ACI . | . ΣΠΑΘ,ΕΠΙ . | . δ \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ|ΜΧΑΡΤΟΥΛ|Τδ ΓΕΝ,Κδ |ΣΑΝΟΤ . |-P,-
- l:* . RACI . | . ΠΑΘ,ΕΠΙ | . \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ| . . PTOVΔ | . . N,Kδ | . . OT . |P,-
- m:* + RACI . |ΑCΠΑΘ,Ε . | . δ \*ΤΡΙΓ, . | . XAPTOV . |Τδ ΓΕΝ,K . |ΣΑΝΟΤ . |-P,-
- n:* + RACIΔ,ΑCΠΑΘ,ΕΠΙ |Τδ \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ | . XAPTOV . | . . EN,K . | . . OT . |P,-
- o:* ΠΑΘ | δ \*ΤΡΙ | XAPTO | δ ΓΕΝ, . | . ΑNOT . |-P,-
- p:* . . . |ΑCΠΑΘ,Ε . | Tδ \*ΤΡΙΓ . |ΜΧΑΡΤΟΥΛ|Τδ ΓΕ . δ |ΣΑΝ . . |-P
- q:* +R . . . |ΑCΠ . . . | Tδ \* . . . |ΜΧΑΡ . . . |Τδ Γ . . . |ΣΑΝ . . |-P
- r:* . . ACI . | . ΣΠΑΘΕΠ . | . δ \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ|ΜΧΑΡΤδ ΛΑ|Τδ ΓΕΝ,Κδ | . NOTA |-P,-
- s:* . . ACI . | . ΣΠΑΘΕΠΙ | . δ \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ| . XAPΤδ Λ . |Τδ ΓΕΝK . | . ΑNOT . |-P
- t:* + RACI . | . ΣΠΑΘΕΠ . | . \*ΤΡΙΓ,Κ| . APTδ . A | . ΓΕΝK . | . . NOT . | .

Here one can distinguish at least four different boulloteria; one represented by specimen *k*; one represented by specimens *l* and *m* (which have a “centralizing dot” between the third and fourth line, surrounded by the letters TP and PT<sup>28</sup>); a third one represented by specimens *n*, *o*, *p*, *q* (which have no such dot and in which the letter C [line 2] is not in line with the other letters); and one represented by specimens *r*, *s*, *t* (which differ from all others in that they carry the spelling XAPΤδ ΛΑ instead of XAPTOVΛ [line 4]).

Now, if one looks closer one realizes that there are some more differences between our seals, differences that cannot be readily explained either by the way they were struck, or by the deforming effect of the heat to which the seals have been exposed. For example, on specimen *m* everything, bust and letters, seems to be larger than on its sister specimen *l*, but the “centralizing dot” is smaller. Instead of supposing that they come from different boulloteria, I would rather consider that the dies of the boulloterion have been retooled, that is, rechiseled by a craftsman. This would have happened between the striking of specimens *l* and *m* and would account for the slight increase in dimensions of all epigraphy and design in *m*, and for the reduction of the useless “centralizing dot.” The same explanation might also account for small differences which appear between specimens *n* and *o* on one side, and *p* and *q* on the other (e.g., these last two have an elongated vertical bar in \* of line 3).

Thus, we have at least four boulloteria that followed each other chronologically; they all repeat the same obverse with a slight epigraphic discrepancy for specimen *k*; they all repeat the same reverse, including the obvious diplography of line 3: Χρ(υσο)τρι(τρι)κ(λινου), with one slight epigraphic discrepancy for the group *r*, *s*, *t*. The engraver, obviously copying from a die of the previous groups, mistakenly carved an δ instead of OV in line 4 and then felt obliged to add one more letter, A, at the end of the line in order to fill the gap he had left. But he stopped there; his line 5 is a faithful copy of the line 5 of his model, as is the rest of the inscription. The repetition of the diplography of line 3 and the way in which the unimportant error of line 4 has been covered are significant: they both show how much the owner of the seal wanted his new boulloterion to look like his old one.

<sup>28</sup>This is a centralizing dot, found also on other seals and coins. It served to help the die-cutter place correctly the various elements of the inscription; it could also be the mark of a compass used in order to carve more precisely the circular border of dots: cf. for example, Zacos-Veglery, no. 2696a; M. Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire 1081–1261*, DOS, XII (Washington, D.C., 1969), 82. It cannot be a mark already on the lead blank, like those that would certainly have existed on some of them (cf. Davidson, *The Minor Objects*, p. 328, no. 2829), since it is not in the center of the blank (and, in any case, would not have survived the pressure of the dies).

Other specimens of our seal are known: one, partly misread, is preserved in Bucharest; it seems to belong to the family *nopq*.<sup>29</sup> A second one, not reproduced, was in the Seyrig collection; it is mentioned by Laurent together with our specimens *l* and *m*, in a new edition of the same seal.<sup>30</sup>

As we have at least four boulloteria I propose the following edition scheme:

*Obv.*: 'Ο ἄγι[ο(ς)] Μᾶρκος *k*

'Ο (ἄγιος) Μᾶρκος *l–t*

*Rev.*: + Βασιλ(ειος) (πρωτο)σπαθ(άριος) ἐπὶ τοῦ Χρ(υσο)τρι{τρι}κ(λίνου), μ(ε)γ(ας) χαρτουλ(άριος)\*  
τοῦ γεν(ι)κοῦ (καὶ) (πρωτο)νοτάρ(ιος).

\*χαρτουλά(ριος) in *r, s, t*

The titles of Basil are all known: πρωτοσπαθάριος ἐπὶ τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου is an honorific title, quite far up the social scale, very well attested in the eleventh century.<sup>31</sup> Basil also occupied a high position in the sekretion of the genikon: he was a great chartularios, that is a chartularios attached to the central office in Constantinople (as opposed to the chartularioi attached to the *arklai* of the provinces).<sup>32</sup> This certainly meant that he had bought this position<sup>33</sup> and, consequently, that he drew from it certain financial advantages; moreover, he also occupied another administrative post, that of protonotarios, which was undoubtedly the most important because mentioned last on his seal.<sup>34</sup>

We have no clue as to what kind of protonotarios Basil was: protonotarios of the *dromos* or of another central office? or a protonotarios of a theme?<sup>35</sup> In the eleventh century appear for the first time protonotarioi attached to the central financial offices, including the genikon;<sup>36</sup> this kind of appointment seems more likely for a person with the background of our Basil.

Be that as it may, Basil must have served as a protonotarios for many years, since he managed to use up at least four boulloteria. Then he turned in a new direction as is shown by the following seal:

Figs. 3–4 *j*: Shaw 135. – Diam. 29 mm. Struck off center; obliterated on one side.

*Obv.* Bust of St. Mark blessing (r. hand) and holding the richly decorated book (l. hand). Border of dots. On either side, vertical inscription: . |Μ|Α|Ρ-Κ| . . : [‘Ο (ἄγιος)] Μᾶρκ[ος]

*Rev.* Inscription of eight lines. Border of dots.

. . ΑCI . . | . ΠΑΘ'ΕΠΙ| . δ̄ ΚΜΧΑΡ| . . ΛΤΥΓΛΟΓ| . . ΡΙΤΙΕΠΙ|ΤΘΙΠΠΟΔ'ΠΕ|ΛΟΠΟΝ, ΣΕ|  
ΛΑΔ'

[+ Β]ασι[λ(ειω)] (πρωτο)σπαθ(άριω) ἐπὶ [τ]οῦ Χρ(υσο)τρικλίνου, μ(ε)γ(ας) χαρ[του]λ(άριω) τοῦ  
γενικοῦ λογ[ο]θ(εσίου) (καὶ) κ]οιτī ἐπὶ τοῦ Ιπποδ(ρόμου) Πελοπον(ήσου) (καὶ) Ελάδ(ος).

Two more specimens of the same seal are known: one belonged to G. Schlumberger, the other is preserved in the Numismatic Museum of Athens. They have been published with mistakes;<sup>37</sup> it is probable that all three come from the same boulloterion.

There cannot be any doubt in my view that this Basil is the same man as our protonotarios: not only

<sup>29</sup> Laurent, *La Collection Orghidan*, no. 166 (reproduced on plate xix); misreadings of the legend have been corrected by the author in the publication mentioned in the following footnote.

<sup>30</sup> V. Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, II (Paris, 1981), no. 338 (our specimen *m* is reproduced on plate 13; the saint of the obverse is wrongly identified as Basil).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 297, 299.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 113 et 313.

<sup>33</sup> In the tenth century an enormous investment (65 litrai of gold) was required of anyone who wanted to occupy a post of (great) chartularios of the genikon: see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, I, Bonn ed. (1829), 694; cf. P. Lemerle, «Roga» et rente d'Etat aux X<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *REB*, 25 (1967) (= *Mélanges V. Grumel*, II), 81.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Oikonomidès, *Listes*, 284.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 390, s.v. In spite of the arguments of Laurent, *Corpus*, II, 77, I do not believe that in the Middle Byzantine period there was a protonotarios at the head of the imperial chancery: such an official is not mentioned in any of the *taktika*, all of which, instead, mention the protonotarios of the dromos (Oikonomidès, *op. cit.*, 57, 59, 117, 153, 233, 251, 273; cf. 311). It seems to me that the protonotarios of the dromos, who was in charge of a certain correspondence (of foreign relations), was naturally associated with the personnel of the imperial chancery (see, e.g., *De ceremoniis*, 10).

<sup>36</sup> Protonotarioi of the genikon: Zepos, *Jus*, IV, 233; Era Vranoussi, *Ἐγγραφα Πάτμου*, I: Αὐτοκρατορικά (Athens, 1980), no. 49 Γ, line 306; cf. *ibid.*, no. 48 Δ, line 248, and 49B, lines 287, 288, 290 (sacelle); *IzvArhInst*, 20 (1955), 454–55 (Mangana); etc.

<sup>37</sup> First by Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, 191, no. 5; 192, no. 4 (with inaccurate drawings of both seals); then by Konstantopoulos, *Βυζαντιακά μολυβδόβουλλα*, no. 398; and again by Laurent, *Corpus*, no. 339 (with a poor photograph of the Athens specimen on plate 13).

the name and part of the titles coincide, but also—and especially—the obverse and the general presentation of the seal are practically a copy of those discussed above. I assume that after having been protonotarios Basil must have managed to become a member of the Constantinopolitan tribunal of the Hippodrome<sup>38</sup> and then obtained a mandate over the united themes of Hellas and Peloponnese. In the eleventh century the judge, also called προστάτως, held the highest administrative position in the province (above the strategos and the protonotarios) and, of course, had the opportunity to benefit from important financial advantages.<sup>39</sup>

I do not think that any further identification of our Basil is likely or is, in fact, possible: the hypotheses of Bees, based mainly on the first name and the office of judge, cannot be considered seriously;<sup>40</sup> the same can be said of the identification with the *praetor* Basil Apokaukos, who was supposed to defend the Peloponnese against the Bulgarians in 996.<sup>41</sup> But there are some seals of the same period which contain the same name and almost the same titles as ours but have a different presentation;<sup>42</sup> could they have belonged to our Basil? I am very sceptical: it is difficult to imagine that a person who demonstrably insisted on uniformity in his seals in several successive boulloteria, would have fabricated a boulloterion so different from the others. We may well have here another Basil, who had the same titles and served in the same office as ours.<sup>43</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this study raise some methodological questions concerning the publication and the commentary of Byzantine lead seals.

1. We have seen that there was an obvious tendency among Byzantine officials to maintain a stable presentation of their seal, even when they had to replace their old boulloterion, or when they had a new boulloterion fabricated because they were being promoted or shifted to a different administrative position. This practice serves to illuminate the expression “usual seal” found in the documents and means that each individual tended to become identified with a particular type of seal, occasionally decorated with the representation of his patron saint (or the Virgin, or a cross, etc.). This conservatism in the decoration and presentation of officials’ seals is well attested: Meligalas in the ninth century,<sup>44</sup> the *proedros* Basil in the tenth,<sup>45</sup> and in the eleventh, many members of imperial families,<sup>46</sup> such

as John the *orphanotrophos*, John the *parakoimomenos*, John Komnenos, John the caesar, Nikephoros Botaneiates<sup>47</sup> Basilakes, Isaakios Komnenos, Alexios Komnenos, Adrianos Komnenos, etc. Small changes are of course conceivable, possibly when one person possessed several boulloteria simultaneously and used each one for different purposes: for example, Andronikos Doukas, whose regular boulloterion carried a bust of the Virgin, while a larger one was decorated with the Virgin seated on the throne.<sup>48</sup> Drastic changes are also possible but rare and, usually, easy to explain: Anna Dalassena changed her boulloterion completely when she added the qualification “mother of the emperor,”<sup>49</sup> Nikephoros Melissenos, when he became caesar,<sup>50</sup> etc.

Of course, it should be borne in mind that the practices on which I have remarked above were subject to modification; after all, the presentation of a seal depended mainly upon its owner, who might have had all kinds of fancies. However, it

<sup>38</sup> Oikonomides, *Listes*, 322–23. This would have been an appointment for life; which makes me think that seals mentioning the title *judge* must be posterior to those on which this title does not appear. Many other chartoularioi of the genikon obtained appointments as judges: Laurent, *Corpus*, II, nos. 340–342, 347, 350.

<sup>39</sup> Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, *Recherches sur l’administration de l’empire byzantin aux IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Athens-Paris, 1960), 69 ff.

<sup>40</sup> N. Bees, “Zur Sigillographie der byzantinischen Themen Peloponnes und Hellas,” *VizVrem*, 21 (1914), 226–28.

<sup>41</sup> S. Lampros, ‘Ο βίος Νίκωνος τοῦ Μετανοεῖτε, in *Neoē Ἑλλ.*, 3 (1906), 174–75.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., *obv.*: cross; *rev.*: Basil imperial protospatharios and great chartoularios of the genikon logothesion (Laurent, *Corpus*, II, no. 340); continuous inscription on obverse and reverse: Basil protospatharios, great chartoularios of the genikon logothesion, judge of the Hippodrome and of Charsianon (Anna Szemioth and T. Wasilewski, “Sceaux byzantins du Musée National de Varsovie,” *Studio Ródloznawcze, Commentationes*, 11 [1966], 36, no. 50). On both these seals the title *epi tou Chrysotriklinou* is absent.

<sup>43</sup> Take, for example, the composition of the sekreton of the *eidikon* in 1045: two persons named Basil bore simultaneously the titles *protospatharios epi tou chrysotriklinou*, *imperial notarios of the eidikon*, and *judge of the Hippodrome*; similar situation with two persons named John. See Zepos, *Jus*, I, 628.

<sup>44</sup> Zacos-Veglery, nos. 2172–2178.

<sup>45</sup> Laurent, *La Collection Orghidan*, nos. 186, 187.

<sup>46</sup> Zacos-Veglery, nos. 2677 bis, 2678, 2681, 2681 bis, 2683, 2687–2690 bis, 2691–2692 bis, 2701–2702, 2703–2707 bis, 2708–2709.

<sup>47</sup> It seems to me certain that the seal no. 2686 (*ibid.*) must have belonged to Nikephoros Botaneiates, the grandfather of the emperor.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 2693 a, b, c.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 2695–2696.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 2697–2699.

would be useful to keep these remarks in mind before proposing any prosopographical identifications, for nothing excludes the possibility that in an empire as large as Byzantium two people with the same first and family names might have obtained the same (or similar) dignities and occupied the same (or similar) offices at approximately the same time. They could well be cousins, sons of brothers and named according to custom after their paternal grandfather, and occupying similar positions in society and in administration.<sup>51</sup>

2. The process of editing seals is complicated by the fact that we may have several specimens coming from the same boulloterion and partly overlapping each other. When we have only one seal, we may consider it as an inscription and apply to it the rules and symbols of epigraphy. But usually a lapidary inscription was unique, whereas the same boulloterion certainly produced many lead seals. Our edition must, therefore, seek to use seals in order to restore the inscriptions of the boulloterion from which they came. This being so, a change in the use of the conventional signs is required: broken brackets, < >, must be reserved to include letters that the die-cutter omitted by mistake, not letters that do not appear on the seal because its blank was too small or badly centered; these should be restored within regular square brackets, [ ]. Moreover, one may wonder whether it is worthwhile to give detailed epigraphical transcriptions of all specimens from the same boulloterion. It seems to me a redundant and useless task, especially if photographs of the seals are available. This is the solution that I adopted in editing the seal of Theodore Beriboes (see Example I).

3. The editorial task becomes even more complicated by the fact that many individuals who wished to have an unchanged "usual seal" tended to reproduce on several successive boulloteria images and inscriptions that were exact—or almost exact—copies of each other. This means that the editor must first establish how many boulloteria have been used for the production of a certain group of seals, always keeping in mind the possibility of retooled boulloteria. But, again, must one edit separately each "boulloterion" (i.e., each sub-group of seals coming from the same boulloterion)? After all, these were deliberately copied from each other,

much as manuscripts were copied from each other or from a common model. I think that in the case of very similar boulloteria, one should rather adopt an approach that would avoid useless redundancy (and expense), and provide the reader with what is really essential: establish the main variants that allow the identification of the boulloteria, give a summary description of each, and then propose a unique epigraphic edition of the text, accompanied by an apparatus, with the variants: this is what I proposed above for Constantine Kamytzes and the protospatharios Basil (Examples III and IV).

4. The blanks used for the production of individual seals may be of interest. In the case of the Beriboes seals, I have suggested that blanks of a certain format only may have been available at a certain time and in a certain place. A possible explanation for this would be that, contrary to the circumstances current in Constantinople, in provincial towns not many people were casting blanks at any given time, and those who were did so in a limited number of formats, which were defined by the molds they possessed. If this question were taken into consideration, especially upon publication of small collections of seals from provincial museums, one might discover whether there were frequent formats of blanks at any given time—and thereby be able to identify seals struck locally (as opposed to those attached to incoming letters) even when this is not obvious from their inscriptions. For the purpose of identifying molds, it might be useful to weigh seals, at least those fully preserved; this would compensate for eventual deformation at the moment they were struck.

5. The above examples have clearly shown that the number of surviving specimens of the seals of an individual does not necessarily reflect the frequency of his use of seals: in the Harvard Collections we have eighteen specimens coming from Theodore Beriboes' unique boulloterion,<sup>52</sup> while we have only one from each of Constantine Kamytzes' four boulloteria (of which some at least must have been made to replace antiquated ones). As I have tried to make clear, a considerable number of seals of the same person may well end up in the same place (e.g., in the ruins of a building) and, consequently, be found together simply by chance.

<sup>51</sup> A problem of this kind is raised, for example, by the existence of several Romanoi Skleroi toward the middle of the eleventh century: W. Seibt, *Die Skleroi* (Vienna, 1976), 76–85.

<sup>52</sup>We may add now that this same Theodore Beriboes had a second boulloterion very similar to the one described here: same bust of St. Theodore, same name and titles; but the distribution of the letters somehow different: American Numismatic Society, Mabbott Collection, no. 5.